
CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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CDF Uses DC-10 to Drop Retardant on Sawtooth Fire Jet Aircraft Marks Historic First for Firefighting

Victorville -- The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) is using a modified DC-10 to drop fire retardant on the Sawtooth Fire.

A four-member flight crew aboard Tanker 910 is working in coordination with CDF support personnel to drop the retardant. The aircraft was deployed at the request of CDF Incident Command Team 8, which has been coordinating firefighting efforts on the blaze.

"This is the first time in history a DC-10 had been utilized in a firefighting capacity," said Director Ruben Grijalva of CDF. "We are always examining firefighting tools that can help save lives and property. Once our staff certified the aircraft we made it available to the Incident Command Team."

Incident Commander Rick Henson made a tactical decision that the Sawtooth Fire would be an appropriate and conducive venue to test the aircraft due to the terrain, weather and fire conditions. "I was fortunate enough to watch this first live fire drop from a nearby helicopter and was very impressed with how much retardant was dropped," said Henson. "I immediately directed my staff to evaluate the retardant's coverage on the ground. Preliminary reports indicate the DC-10 retardant met the objective of slowing the fire's spread."

Three separate external tanks with a capacity of 12,000 U.S. gallons of retardant were utilized during the two separate flights by Tanker 910. The operational objective is for the aircraft to build a buffer of retardant between the Sawtooth Fire and the community of Big Bear while allowing ground crews to get in position to build a containment line.

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Tanker 910 was certified or “carded” today by the CDF Aviation Management Unit after the aircraft was tested repeatedly with numerous drops in the desert as well as runs on higher elevations. Tanker 910 is certified by the FAA and meets the same maintenance standards as passenger-carrying planes of the identical size.

The DC-10 is a 31-year-old former passenger jet that was jointly developed over the past four years by Omni Air International of Tulsa, Oklahoma and Cargo Conversions LLC, a freighter conversion company based in San Carlos, California. A demonstration of Tanker 910 in late March for state fire officials and the media at Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville, formerly the George Air Force Base, located in the Mojave Desert. Tanker 910 was leased today by CDF at a cost of \$52,000.

Lightning started the Sawtooth Fire on July 9 and it has since consumed 62,000 acres and destroyed 58 residences and 171 outbuildings in San Bernardino County. The fire has caused one fatality and 12 minor injuries. Property loss is estimated at \$8,702,000. Currently, in addition to the DC-10, there are 85 fire crews; 206 engines; 8 airtankers; 15 helicopters and 35 bulldozers battling the blaze, with 60 percent containment.

The Sawtooth Fire is being managed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Incident Command Team 8 in conjunction with CDF, San Bernardino County Fire, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's office, U.S. Forest Service, CHP, LA County Fire, CA Dept. of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Red Cross, and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services

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